

**INTERIM REPORT ON ACTIVITIES OF
THE INTERAGENCY TASK FORCE ON CERTIFICATION AND
LICENSING OF TRANSITIONING MILITARY PERSONNEL**

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BACKGROUND

In recent years there has been an increased reliance on certification and licensure as a primary form of recognition of competency in job-related skills and knowledge. Employers, federal, state and local government agencies, professional associations, unions, and the general public have turned to credentialing to regulate entry into occupations and to promote safety, professionalism, and career growth. The amount of private sector credentialing has grown tremendously in recent years, and hundreds of professional and trade associations presently offer certification in their specific fields. The past few years have shown a similar increase in occupational regulation by both the state and federal governments. As a result, over the past decade the number of both mandatory and optional credentialing programs has increased steadily.

This increased emphasis on certification and licensure in the workplace can present significant barriers for transitioning military personnel seeking employment in the civilian workforce. Credentialing standards, such as education, training, and experience requirements are developed based upon traditional methods for obtaining competency in the civilian workforce. As a result, many transitioning military personnel who have received their career preparation through military service find it difficult to compete with their civilian counterparts for jobs. Those who are able to obtain employment in their field without the appropriate credentials may be hired at a lower pay and skill scale than their civilian counterparts who are credentialed, even though they may have received comparable training in the military.

The Interagency Task Force on Certification and Licensing of Transitioning Military Personnel (hereafter referred to as the Task Force), was formed through a joint effort by the Departments of Labor/Veterans' Employment and Training Service (DoL/VETS) and Veterans Affairs (VA). A Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) formally establishing the Task Force was signed by the Deputy Secretaries of these agencies on April 24, 1998. A copy of the MOU is provided in Appendix I. The Task Force's mission is to serve as a catalyst for obtaining recognition of military training and experience by civilian credentialing boards. The primary focus of the Task Force is on reducing barriers presented by federal and state certification and licensure requirements as well as barriers to employment in federal government agencies. As a secondary focus, the Task Force has been assisting and monitoring several DoL/VETS initiatives related to credentialing of current and former military personnel. These include a state pilot program designed to promote acceptance of veterans' training and experience by state credentialing bodies; the creation of an Internet website providing a consolidated source of information on credentialing for current and former military personnel; and a private sector certification initiative designed to promote Microsoft certification among current and former military personnel.

Illustrating the Problem

As noted above, the Task Force was designed to address the problems inherent in the process of transitioning from the military to the civilian work sector. Specifically, the problems surrounding

training, certification, and licensure and the contrasting expectations between the military and civilian sectors. In order to best illustrate this problem, a hypothetical case is described below. Please note that this particular case deals with problems inherent in attaining a state license, however the Task Force found that circumstances are similar for federal certification and licensure.

Seaman Smith, a three year veteran in the Navy trained and served as an electrician on a submarine stationed out of Norfolk, Virginia. He had planned on returning to his home in Denver, Colorado to become an electrician in the growing home building and construction industry. As the date of his separation neared, Smith was confident that the training he received would be applicable, since he was servicing electrical systems on nuclear submarines. If the training he received was good enough for the military, it should be good enough to gain a good paying job to support himself and his family.

Following an honorable discharge, Smith moved his family back to his hometown in the Denver area. Once he began looking for work, he learned the he would have to obtain a license by the state of Colorado before he could work as an electrician. Confident that he had the requisite training and experience, Smith contacted the State Electrical Board to apply for a Journeyman Electrician's license. He learned that he was required to provide proof that he had four years of electrical construction experiences, for lights, heat, and power; with a minimum of two years of that time being commercial and/or industrial work.

Smith provided background information from the Navy documenting his experience and learned that he did not have the requisite amount of experience and training that is needed to become a licensed journeyman electrician in Colorado. He would now have to gain this needed experience and therefore work at a lower pay scale. Having a family to support, Smith was disappointed that the time that he so proudly served in the Navy was being ignored and he wished he had been educated about this requirement long before he had chosen this course.

While this account of a service member who served his nation in the hopes of learning a trade is fictional, it exemplifies the real life barriers that transitioning military personnel face when they leave the service. The military offers many high quality training and apprenticeship programs, however the problems arise when the service members attempt to transfer those qualifications across to the civilian sector. The goals of this Task Force and other initiatives by DoL/VETS are to address those barriers in such a way that service members will leave the military with enough training, experience, and information on certification and licensing requirements to gain employment in their chosen field in the civilian sector.

Overview of Credentialing

Occupational credentialing refers to the establishment of standards for entry into a given field. A credential — typically a license or certification — is issued to an individual to indicate that he or she has met a set of predetermined minimum standards related to performance in the given field.

Obtaining a credential prior to practicing in a field may be required or optional. Mandatory credentials are issued by governmental agencies and are typically referred to as licenses. Because of the mandatory nature of licensure, it is considered the most restrictive form of professional and occupational regulation. Optional credentials may be issued by a number of different types of organizations, such as professional associations and private companies, and are usually called certifications. In recent years there have also been significant developments in the establishment of a voluntary system of national skill standards that will specify the knowledge and competence required to successfully perform in a given occupation or field. Ultimately, individuals will be able to become certified based on these national skill standards as well.

There are a variety of reasons for establishing standards to regulate entry into a given occupation. In the case of optional credentials, the standards are often designed to confer professional status or promote professional growth, as in many white collar professional certifications such as human resources or accounting. Licenses, on the other hand, are typically issued with the objective of protecting the people who come into contact with the individuals in the regulated occupation. Licenses for doctors, nurses, and other health care practitioners are a primary example of credentials that are intended to protect the public in this manner. In some instances, the standards have been established for consumer protection — to ensure that individuals practicing in certain fields have the appropriate qualifications to perform quality work. Yet in other cases, the consumer protection objective is carried a step further to apply to issues of health, safety, and welfare.

Prior Research on Effect of Credentialing on Current and Former Military Personnel

Until recently, little systematic research had been conducted on the extent to which current and former military personnel meet civilian credentialing standards. A great deal of anecdotal information was available on problems encountered by veterans seeking to become credentialed in the civilian workforce, but there was no specific information on the barriers encountered or the number of individuals leaving the military who might be affected by credentialing. In recent years, two studies have shed light on these issues.

American Legion Study. In 1997, The American Legion published a study conducted under a grant from the U.S. Department of Labor's Veterans' Employment and Training Service. As a first step towards examining issues related to civilian credentialing of current and former military personnel, the study focused on credentialing issues in the aircraft maintenance and health care fields. These two occupational categories were chosen because a relatively high proportion of individuals in the military were in these occupational areas and because these areas tend to be heavily credentialed in the civilian workforce. The results of the study indicate that differences between the career preparation provided in the military and that required by civilian credentialing bodies make it difficult for military personnel in certain occupational areas to become credentialed. The American Legion recommended a number of steps to improve the ability of current and former military personnel to become credentialed.

Transition Commission Study. As a follow up to the American Legion Study, the Congressional Commission on Servicemembers and Veterans Transition Assistance (referred to as the Transition Commission) conducted a study that identified the universe of civilian occupations relevant to military personnel that are credentialed. The Transition Commission then determined the number of military personnel leaving the service in FY 97 who were in the occupations affected by credentialing. The results of the Transition Commission research indicate that 38 percent of departing enlisted service members were in occupations directly affected by credentialing. Additional information on the findings of the Transition Commission can be found in Appendix II.

MEMBERSHIP AND ACTIVITIES REGARDING CERTIFICATION AND LICENSURE

Agencies and organizations that were invited to the initial meeting and subsequent monthly meetings of the Task Force represent all the relevant entities providing services to military personnel regarding training, education and credentialing. Additionally, as many federal agencies as possible were invited.

Not all of the agencies participating in the Task Force actually issue licenses or certifications. For example, the Department of Defense and the military branches do not provide licenses or certificates, but they play a strong role in preparing service members for the civilian workforce, including licensure and certification. Some of the civilian agencies participating in the Task Force also do not provide formal credentials; however, their representatives have chosen to participate in the Task Force because their agencies have a strong commitment to hiring veterans and are interested in ensuring that their veteran candidates are well qualified. Below is a listing of the federal agencies that have been represented in the four meetings of the Task Force and a brief description of the role they play related to preparing, hiring, or credentialing current or former military personnel. An attendance report can be found in Appendix III.

Department of Agriculture

- Assists veterans with disabilities to secure employment. Additional activities are planned.
- Hires veterans according to Office of Personnel Management (OPM) standards.

Department of Commerce

- Hires former navy personnel who must be certified by the Coast Guard.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Defense/Air Force

- Has 50 Air Force related career fields - 10 of which require a license or certificate that the Air Force provides.

- Operates the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) which provides Associate's Degrees in 67 occupational fields to Air Force personnel in 30 states, the District of Columbia, and 8 foreign countries. CCAF is accredited by the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools.
- Implementing a computer-based training program for which members can take on-line computer courses and receive certificates.

Department of Defense/Army

- Through Job Assistance Centers, helps employees identify the skills needed to meet their job aspirations, and in the last six months of active duty, helps them complete those requirements.
- Assists those not wishing to attend college to obtain certification.
- In-service certification required in the health care, legal, and aircraft fields.
- Establishment of an occupational degree program through partnerships with service members, Opportunity Colleges and the higher education community. Degree networks being established in aviation, health science, electronics, and information/telecommunication systems.

Department of Defense/Navy and Marine Corps

- Operates the Navy/Marine Corps National Apprenticeship Program. This program provides registered certification of the Sailor and Marine training and work experience to make them recognized as an equal to their civilian counterparts.
- Currently developing the Sailor/Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART), which will provide Sailors and Marines with an academically recognized transcript of all military training and education. This transcript can be obtained on demand while on active duty as well as after leaving military service.

Department of Defense/Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES)

- Has MOUs with over 30 national and/or international credentialing bodies to support the facilitating of test administration to all military branches of the services worldwide.
- Operates the Troops to Teachers Program.
- Provides system to assess military training in terms of civilian academic standards.

Department of Defense/Office of the Secretary of Defense (OSD)

- Operates the Educational Programs for the Department of Defense (DoD).
- DoD hires proportionately more veterans than any other agency - approximately 20,000 a year.

Department of Education

- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Health and Human Services

- In the process of developing a centralized database of credentialed healthcare workers.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Housing and Urban Development

- Provides homeless and housing assistance to needy veterans.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Interior

- Does not certify or license personnel, but is one of the government's most diverse employers in terms of occupations. They hire many individuals who have already obtained certifications.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Justice

- Does not directly certify or license military personnel, but is interested in using whatever products developed from the Task Force to fill their jobs.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Labor/Veterans' Employment and Training Service

- Administers various programs aimed at reducing barriers to veteran employment.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Labor/Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training

- Implements and oversees a variety of apprenticeship programs.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Transportation/Coast Guard

- Evaluates military sea service and service ratings for equivalency to the service required for qualifying an individual for a Merchant Marine Officer's License or Merchant Mariner's Document.

- Service members may request the Coast Guard to evaluate their sea service whether on active-duty or discharged from the military.

Department of Transportation/Federal Aviation Administration

- Has an effort underway to have Air Force examiners designated as FAA examiners.
- Issues certificates or licenses for a number of occupations including: pilot, aircraft mechanic, aircraft repairer, air traffic control tower operator, aircraft dispatcher, flight engineer, flight instructor, flight navigator, and parachute rigger.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Transportation/Federal Highway Administration

- Initiated pilot program with Army to grant Commercial Drivers Licenses to participants in program at Ft. Eustis.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Department of Veterans Affairs

- Administers benefits programs for veterans including Montgomery GI Bill.
- Provides vocational rehabilitation services to assist veterans with service-connected disabilities to secure suitable employment.
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

Environmental Protection Agency

- Does not directly license or certify. However, there are thousands of positions which are affected in terms of being licensed or certified to meet EPA standards established in federal contracts (for example, in connection with qualification of employees hired by contractors to clean up Superfund sites).
- Hires veterans according to OPM standards.

General Services Administration

- GSA does not have any licensing or certification programs. However, GSA does actively recruit veterans, using the standards set by OPM.

Military Sealift Command

- Hires former military personnel who must be certified by the Coast Guard.

National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC)

- Developing an Internet accessible database of state licensure requirements - Licensed Occupational Information System (LOIS).

National Partnership for Reinventing Government (Formally NPR)

- Promotes the reinvention of federal government agencies to be more efficient and customer service oriented.

National Skill Standards Board (NSSB)

- Establishing a national system of voluntary skill standards through Voluntary Partnerships made up of industry, labor, special interest groups, and community groups.

Office of Personnel Management (OPM)

- Does not directly license or certify, however, they do set minimum qualifications for all federal jobs. This can include educational requirements and other particular requirements which, in many cases are licenses, such as FCC and FAA types of licenses.

Small Business Administration

- Does not have any licensing or certification programs, however, actively recruits veterans using the standards set by OPM.

U.S. Customs Service

- Grants licenses to Customs Brokers.

SUMMARY OF TASK FORCE ACTIVITIES

To date, the Task Force has held five monthly meetings. The first meeting was held on June 9, 1998. Activities that were undertaken during this meeting included a background briefing on the issues surrounding certification and licensure of former military personnel and the reasons for the creation of a Task Force. Following this, each agency representative in attendance gave a briefing on the efforts being made by their organization surrounding the certification and licensure issue. Finally, the group held a brainstorming session in an attempt to identify and define goals and objectives, as well as an organizational structure to best achieve them. It was agreed that the bulk of the work of the Task Force would be best addressed through the creation of smaller working groups. These groups could consider specific subjects best utilizing the expertise of each of the

members.

The second meeting of the Task Force was held on July 14th. DynCorp I&ET gave a presentation on the results of two studies related to certification and licensure of transitioning military personnel - the American Legion Study and the Transition Commission Study. A summary of this presentation is provided in Appendix II. Following this, the Task Force broke into three working groups. Each working group identified short and long term goals for the group, as well as barriers to achieving them.

The third meeting of the Task Force was held on August 20th. Ms. Ellen Scully, Skills Strategy Coordinator for the AFL-CIO, gave a presentation on the efforts which unions make concerning certification and licensing of their members. She noted that there are 3 areas in which the AFL-CIO is involved regarding certification and licensure. These include: 1) representation on state licensing boards; 2) backing of legislative efforts in support of licensing and certification of tradespeople; and 3) provision of training programs for union members leading to certification or licensure. The labor market has undergone significant changes within the last decade and the role of licenses and certification has been impacted. In an attempt to clarify these changes, Ms. Scully described what she perceives are the three types of labor markets within which the trade unions work:

- Regulated Market - In the regulated market, public licensing boards hold exams and issue individual licenses based upon requisite skills and market demands for the workers.
- Structured Internal Labor Market - Employers determine qualifications and standards. Degrees and/or licenses may or may not be required. Usually internal training programs are required for highly specialized skills and external sources of training for broader skills. No standards are established in this market except for those of the individual employers.
- Contingent Labor Market - This is a relatively new type of labor market that came about as a result of major corporate downsizing. Many of the skills essential to business operations are now being contracted out or hired temporarily. Much of the work is found in the service industry and involves low-level skills. Union influence is relatively weak.

Following a review of the membership of each of the three working groups organized at the previous meeting, the Task Force decided to reorganize into two working groups. The revised groups were now identified as:

Working Group 1: Civilian Agencies that Credential and Support Credentialing
Working Group 2: Federal Agencies that Employ Former Military Personnel

Each of the two working groups reviewed the status of the objectives and barriers identified from the previous meeting. Appropriate changes and additions were made to each.

The fourth meeting of the Task Force was held on September 29, 1998. Following Task Force business, the working groups met to discuss the status of the objectives and barriers. Updates were made and the focus of the working groups was on the development of this Interim Activity Report. The activities, interfaces, plans, and proposals that follow below are the result of discussions held in the two working groups. The fifth meeting, held on October 27, 1998 was devoted solely to review and comment of the first draft of this Report. The five Task Force and working group reports are provided in Appendix IV.

ACCOMPLISHMENTS TO DATE

This section documents five types of accomplishments that the Task Force has achieved in the first four months since the inaugural meeting in June, 1998. As described above, the Task Force and its working groups labored to develop goals and objectives and identified barriers to certification and licensure. Below is a description of the results of these meetings. They are roughly categorized into:

- Identification of Existing Interfaces Between Member Agencies
- Identification of Barriers to Certification, Licensure, and Credentialing
- New Interfaces as a Result of Task Force Meetings
- Plans - Efforts to be Undertaken by Member Agencies
- Proposals - Future Activities Which Require Outside Authorization and Cooperation

The first activity undertaken was to identify previously existing interfaces between member agencies of the Task Force. Below is a description of those existing cooperative agreements that are in place. The Task Force agreed that these interfaces can serve as models for future initiatives.

Following this, the Task Force and its working groups identified barriers that currently exist to hamper the ease with which transitioning military personnel are able to gain certification and/or licensing and subsequent employment at the federal level. The identification of existing barriers in the system serves to guide the Task Force toward specific objectives. These barriers are documented below.

As a result of the creation of the Task Force, a dialogue that did not previously exist has developed between various agencies. One of the early goals of the Department of Labor/VETS and Department of Veterans Affairs in convening the Task Force was to create an interaction and information exchange between federal agencies. In the brief time meetings have been held, a positive working relationship has been created between the numerous agency representatives in attendance.

Finally, the Task Force identified plans and proposals that can be undertaken by both member-agencies as well as outside organizations and that will facilitate the ability of current and former military personnel to become credentialed. Plans are those activities that can be initiated by member-agencies of the Task Force without a significant amount of institutional effort. Conversely, proposals for future activities are those items identified by the Task Force that require the assistance of outside agencies or institutions, e.g., legislative changes, to be realized.

DOCUMENTATION OF EXISTING EFFORTS DISCOVERED BY THE TASK FORCE

Following a review of agency activities, the Task Force identified each of the interfaces described below. The interactions are a result of agency cooperation independent of Task Force activities. Both the programmatic and procedural experiences can be reviewed at a future time as a model for other inter-agency cooperatives.

Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Support (DANTES)

DANTES has Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with over thirty professional certifying agencies with national or international recognition. Each MOU establishes procedures for administering tests to military personnel at base education centers worldwide. DANTES funds two certification programs for military personnel on an ongoing basis: The National Institute for Automotive Service Excellence (ASE) and Food Protection Certification Programs (FPCP). DANTES has also funded special certification pilot programs for eligible military personnel. Currently they fund the following: The Liaison Council on Certification for the Surgical Technologist (LCC-ST), Institute for Certification of Computing Professionals (ICCP), Electronics Technicians Association, International (ETA-I) -- Fiber Optics Installer (FOI), and Certified Technical Trainer (CTT). Recently DANTES began after-the-fact reimbursement for the Air Force Reserve (AFR) and the Army National Guard (ARNG).

Federal Aviation Administration and Military Branches

The Federal Aviation Administration (FAA) currently has a process that awards credentials to individuals based on hours and training earned while in the military. This includes pilots in each of the branches. The FAA is currently in the process of working with the Air Force to recognize Air Force examiners so a certification test can be conducted at the airline transport pilot level for Air Force pilots.

Federal Highway Administration and Army - Ft. Eustis Pilot Program on Commercial Drivers License

The Federal Highway Administration (FHWA) has a program that recognizes the truck-driver training and testing program administered by the Army at Fort Eustis, Virginia. Below is a brief

description of how the program came into being.

In 1990, the FHWA received a letter from the Army Transportation Center at Fort Eustis requesting recognition of their truck testing and licensing program as equivalent to the Federal Commercial Drivers License (CDL) program administered by the state licensing agencies. The also requested that the states grant reciprocity to holders of Army truck drivers licenses.

The Army offered to provide documentation that they were in compliance with the various requirements of the CDL program and welcomed a verification visit from the FHWA. They further stated that having the Army administer CDL tests will have long-term benefits for everyone concerned with safe truck operations. Soldiers would have an incentive to perform safely with the prospect of employment in the motor carrier industry after serving in the Army. The Army would benefit in that the CDL reciprocity with the Army would enhance recruitment. The state licensing agencies would benefit because they would not have to incur testing expenses. The trucking industry would benefit because they would have drivers to fill a current shortage of employees. Finally, the public would benefit with well-trained and disciplined Army drivers employed as commercial truck drivers operating safely on the highways.

Based on that letter request, the FHWA conducted a review of the Army truck driver and skills testing and licensing procedures at Fort Eustis in the same manner as they conduct reviews of each of the state CDL programs. After a series of onsite meetings and observations of the Army program and review of their documentation, the FHWA made some recommendations to bring the Army truck driver and licensing program into compliance with the CDL program.

Upon receiving confirmation that the Army had made the recommended changes to their program, the FHWA notified the American Association of Motor Vehicle Administrators that the Army's truck driver testing and licensing program at Fort Eustis is equivalent to the CDL program administered by the states, and should be accepted by any state in the same manner as it would accept the results of CDL tests and licenses from any other state.

There is no federal requirement that a state must automatically grant a CDL to a driver transferring into the state. Further testing may be required if the state agency deems necessary, but many states are now honoring the license in a direct transfer to a CDL as long as the individual has a solid driving record. This was the first time that FHWA ever worked with a jurisdiction other than a state regarding CDL.

Coast Guard and Army - Fort Eustis Training

Fort Eustis, Virginia serves as the training center for military personnel, offering courses on Marine Radar Observer and the Global Marine Distress and Safety Signal (GMDSS). The Army received Coast Guard approval to offer these classes as meeting some of the requirements necessary to obtain a U.S. Merchant Mariner's License. This program could serve as a model for future

cooperation across agencies on education, training and credentialing programs seeking Coast Guard approval.

BAT and Military Branches - Apprenticeship Program Cooperation

The Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training (BAT) has a unique partnership with the military. BAT provides consultative and technical services to registered military programs which have approximately 50,000 service members participating in apprenticeship training in a large number of occupations. Military apprenticeship standards meet federal requirements covered in Title 29, CFR Part 29 for registration by the BAT. Apprenticeship standards address the required on-the-job training and related technical instruction service members must complete in order to be issued a Certificate of Completion. The registered apprenticeship program provides documentation of quality training for those service members participating in the program.

The Bureau of Apprenticeship and Training further provides assistance to service members by working closely with State Approving Agencies for veterans benefits to insure that those eligible individuals wishing to draw their VA benefits are able to do so during their term of apprenticeship. The BAT field staff also participates in registered apprenticeship workshops hosted by the military to provide service members being discharged or affected by closing/downsizing of a military installation with information about apprenticeships and openings in the community.

Military Sealift Command and Coast Guard

The mission of the Military Sealift Command (MSC) is to provide ocean transportation of equipment, fuel, supplies, and ammunition to sustain U.S. forces worldwide during peacetime and in war for as long as operational requirements dictate.

The Military Sealift Command employs Civil Service Mariners (CIVMARS) to operate many of its vessels. Other vessels are managed by commercial operating companies which hire the marine personnel. Although the Coast Guard does not inspect some MSC vessels, they license or certify civilian crew members for the positions they serve. Such licensing and/or certification is a condition of employment. The Coast Guard has the authority to investigate and take administrative action against a person's license, certificate or document held by any civil service or contract crew member employed on board MSC vessels. The Coast Guard and MSC have a Memorandum of Agreement which outlines the procedure to be followed regarding manning requirements.

This type of cooperation can serve as a model for other agencies that may be interested in utilizing the credentialing system from one another. Additionally, the procedures and protocols that were developed may be a valuable resource for any new inter-agency initiatives.

IDENTIFICATION OF BARRIERS TO CERTIFICATION, LICENSURE AND CREDENTIALING

Recognizing that there are a number of factors that have an impact on the ability of current and former military personnel to obtain civilian credentials, the Task Force set out to identify those barriers that have the greatest potential to impede credentialing. The barriers identified encompassed a variety of issues, including such things as military procedures, civilian recognition of military training and experience, and the lack of information on civilian credentialing procedures. What follows is a summary of the barriers identified by the Task Force.

DoD Perceptions Regarding Effect of Credentialing on Retention

Throughout its work, the Task Force has been sensitive to concerns on the part of the Department of Defense regarding the potential impact that promoting credentialing might have on the military service's ability to retain qualified individuals. The mission of DoD is to recruit and retain a qualified military force capable of carrying out all types of combat and support operations. Some in DoD are concerned that by training and credentialing individuals for civilian employment, the military is actually promoting a low rate of retention. This is because active duty personnel could take these skills and market themselves in the civilian labor market for a much higher salary than afforded in the military.

While the Task Force realizes this is a major concern of the DoD, there is some evidence that those individuals who utilize education programs provided by the military actually reenlist in order to take advantage of further training and study.¹ While this is the only known study on retention rates with a narrow focus on one branch — the Navy, the results suggest, at the least, a reconsideration of the traditional view on the relationship of education and retention and reenlistment issues. The Task Force will further explore this issue along with ways to balance the military's need to retain personnel, with the service members' need to become credentialed for their eventual move into civilian life.

Military Personnel's Lack of Information on Credentialing Issues

Another major barrier related to the ability of current and former military personnel to become credentialed is the lack of information on the part of the service member on credentialing issues in general, and on the resources available to obtain credentialing while in the service or upon exiting. Prior studies on the credentialing of current and former military personnel confirm that the lack of

¹ A study by the Center for Naval Analyses found that college education through the Voluntary Education (VOLED) Program in the Navy has a significant positive impact on retention. 31% of first-term active-duty enlisted Sailors with no college education reenlist. 37% with at least 15 college credits chose to reenlist and 55 % of those with 60 credits also reenlist. Data taken from report entitled, Effectiveness of the Voluntary Education Program, April 1998. Excerpts from this report are found in Appendix V.

information can be a major impediment, and that providing information can go a long way to improving the ability of individuals to obtain civilian jobs in credentialed fields.

Military Personnel's Lack of Awareness of Credentialing Barriers. The relative lack of understanding on the part of the individual service member of the number and complexity of barriers that influence the success or failure of an effective transition from military to civilian certification and licensing were commonly cited issues during Task Force meetings. In many instances, military personnel do not become aware of the barriers to employment presented by credentialing until after they leave the service and attempt to obtain civilian employment. This lack of awareness can impede their ability to make a smooth and timely transition from the military to civilian workforce.

Lack of Systematic Dissemination of Information Credentialing Resources. Related to the previous barrier is the lack of information on the resources that are available to military personnel to support them in their efforts to become credentialed while on active duty or after leaving the service. Currently there is a need for increased effort to inform service members about programs that provide education, training, apprenticeships, credentialing, and college entrance exams. Without this information, military personnel may not be inclined to pursue credentialing because of the perceived complexity of the issues.

Impediments Faced by Military Personnel Seeking Credentialing

For those current and former military personnel who become aware of credentialing issues, a number of impediments might be encountered when they actually attempt to become credentialed. The barriers identified by the Task Force in this area include logistical issues as well as financial issues.

Geographic Dispersion of Military Personnel/Access to Education and Training. In order to meet civilian credentialing standards, military personnel in certain fields will have to obtain additional education or training. This can be difficult for those who are in geographic locations where the required training or education programs are not accessible. For those fields where training is accessible, access to credentialing exams can also pose a problem for military personnel located in certain parts of the world. While the Defense Activity for Non-Traditional Education Services (DANTES) has greatly facilitated access to credentialing exams in a number of occupational areas, because of funding constraints, it is not able to offer credentialing exams in other areas.

Fees for Certification/Licensure Exams. Another impediment that was identified is the financial obstacle related to certification and licensing exams that may be encountered by service members. The fees associated with certification and licensure are wide ranging, and can present a significant cost for individuals whose resources are modest. While DANTES previously had been receiving monies to offset the costs of these tests, this funding has recently been discontinued.

Problems Surrounding the Use of the Montgomery GI Bill Funds in Lieu of Traditional Tuition Assistance While Still on Active Duty. Another barrier exists because the use of Montgomery GI Bill funds for full-time study while still in the military results in a disproportionate reduction of the amount of the benefit available after completion of military service.

Civilian Credentialing Boards' Lack of Information on Military Training and Experience

Another type of credentialing barrier identified by the Task Force is the civilian credentialing boards' lack of information about military training and experience and formal documentation of such.

Lack of Recognition of Military Training and Experience. One of the largest potential credentialing barriers is the lack of knowledge and recognition on the part of civilian credentialing boards of military training and experience. For many occupational areas, civilian credentialing boards are unaware of the types of training and experience received by military personnel and therefore fail to recognize the applicability to civilian credentialing standards. This was the overriding impetus for the creation of the Task Force, as well as other DoL/VETS initiatives in other sectors. For example, the state and private industry pilots discussed below.

Information Exchange - Differing Terminology and Packaging of Information. Another barrier that appears to be a common problem for transitioning military personnel is the lack of a common terminology between the military and the civilian sectors. Training, education and experience in the military services through the military occupational specialties do not always easily translate into civilian language. Thus, expertise that an individual may indeed possess may not be recognized when he or she attempts to become credentialed and employed. It is the position of the Task Force that military personnel seeking credentialing could benefit greatly if the civilian credentialing boards had information on the types of military education, training, and experience provided in the occupational areas over which the boards have purview.

Documentation of Military Training and Experience. Civilian credentialing boards are also often unaware of the types of formal documentation available that provide a profile of the training and experience received by individuals while in the military. The Verification of Military Education and Training (VMET) 2586 form is similar in purpose to a college transcript in that it formally documents the training and experience obtained during military service. If more civilian credentialing boards were aware of the existence of this type of documentation, they could better assess the extent to which the current or former service member meets the boards' credentialing standards.

There are formatting issues related to the military transcripts, however. The transcripts can be very redundant in the way that the information is presented, which makes it more difficult for a credentialing board or potential employer to analyze the background data that is provided on the former service member. The Task Force believes that improving the documentation of military training and experience for both current and former military personnel is an important part of

promoting their ability to become credentialed.

Exchange of Transcripts Between Navy/Marine Corps/Army and Civilian Credentialing Boards. Related to the problems of differing terminology and the need for documentation of military training and experience, are problems with the exchange of transcripts between military and civilian credentialing boards. Unlike the system used among institutions of higher education, in which transcripts are sealed and submitted from high schools to colleges, or one university or college to the other, currently military transcripts are given to military personnel, who then transfer them to the interested third party. The system of military transcript transfer does not have a set of rules to follow to maintain the integrity of these transcripts. Because of this, credentialing boards and employers may be reluctant to accept the credibility of these transcripts due to the risk of tampering.

The Air Force does not suffer from this problem because the Community College of the Air Force (CCAF) is a nationally accredited institution of higher education that adheres to nationally accepted transcript transfer methods. These transcripts document not only the educational background of the service member, but also any training and job experience as well. The other services are considering replicating this system. The Task Force fully endorses any attempt to address this problem.

Barriers Related to Obtaining Union Membership

Credentialing barriers related to union membership were also identified by the Task Force. Transitioning military personnel have experienced difficulty in entering specific trades due to the control that local unions have over the labor pool. As a result of a presentation by the national office of the AFL-CIO, the Task Force learned that local economies are a significant factor influencing the number of licenses that are given in a particular market. Union officials, in many cases, sit on the credentialing boards. This allows the unions to assist in the regulation of the number of licensed workers in a particular market, thereby preventing a glut in the number of licensed trades persons. Many transitioning military personnel are unaware of this barrier until they attempt to enter the civilian job market.

Federal Government Impediments

The Task Force also discovered some general impediments to employment that might be encountered by veterans seeking federal employment. Former military personnel, as well as any other applicants who apply for sensitive positions in the federal government, are required to undergo a background check prior to hiring. A delay in the hiring process occurs while this background check is performed, thus increasing the time between discharge and civilian employment. Many military personnel may already have had requisite background checks. Requiring a new background check can result in avoidable delays to entry into federal employment.

NEW COOPERATIVE EFFORTS ESTABLISHED AS A RESULT OF THE TASK FORCE

A positive result of the convening of the Task Force has been the cultivation of relationships between member agencies that did not previously exist. The interaction that occurred has led to a significant learning process and a better understanding of the policies and operating philosophies of each of the agencies concerning certification and licensure. The new interfaces have also resulted in new initiatives designed to alleviate credentialing barriers. Some of the more advanced initiatives underway are described below.

Preliminary Agreement Between FAA and Navy and Marine Corps Apprenticeship Programs

Task Force activities have brought about interactions between the FAA and the Navy and Marine Corps Apprenticeship Programs in an effort to resolve potential problems related to the ability of military personnel in obtaining FAA licenses. The FAA is currently accepting public comment concerning a Revision of Certification Requirement amending Federal Aviation Regulations. This proposed ruling will create additional problems for service members who wish to obtain their licenses. The Air Force and Navy mechanics are very much concerned with these proposed changes and are willing to work together for the cause. As a result of Task Force meetings, representatives of the FAA and the Navy and Marine Corps Apprenticeship Programs have been meeting to try to address these concerns.

One idea that is being considered by the FAA and the Navy and Marine Corps Apprenticeship Programs is adopting a policy that would allow individuals to obtain FAA certification in one of three ways: 1) through FAA accredited schools; 2) through completion of military degree programs; or 3) through completion of Department of Labor regulated apprenticeship programs. The Navy's National Apprenticeship Program officials have invited representatives from the FAA to visit their Naval Air Technical Training Center and Naval Air Maintenance Training Group Headquarters located in Pensacola, Florida as a precursor to FAA approval. The FAA has agreed to conduct a study of the Navy's course instruction and Work Processes Schedules for its aircraft mechanics. Through this study, changes needed to meet FAA standards will be determined. A Memorandum of Understanding will be written and signed between the Navy and FAA once both parties come to an agreement.

OPM and Navy and Marine Corps Apprenticeship Programs

Another relationship that has been forged as a result of the creation of the Task Force, is between the Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and the Navy and Marine Corps Apprenticeship Programs. Representatives of these two agencies are currently working together to determine whether Navy and Marine Corps apprenticeship programs might match federal employment requirements. Specifically, representatives from OPM and the Navy and Marine Corps Apprenticeship Programs have entered into a discussion in which OPM will review the training programs offered through the apprenticeship programs for appropriateness in consideration of

education and experience for positions within the federal government.

Joint Military Apprenticeship Work Group

The creation of this Work Group represents another piece of the overall movement to address the barriers to transitioning military personnel. With representatives from all four military branches and DoL's Bureau of Apprenticeship Training (BAT), this group is exploring the feasibility of the merger of efforts by the services to create a nationally recognized DoD apprenticeship program.

Additionally, this group will select five to seven occupations that have "joint service apprenticeship commonality" and established DoL standards. These selections will then be provided to the AFL-CIO for review by the affiliated Building and Construction Trades Union Advisory Committee. Working with the AFL-CIO, each service will provide background documentation of the selected joint apprenticeable occupational specialties. It is expected that this exchange of information will help unions to recognize the occupational training that is provided in the military.

The convening of the Work Group is attributable to the efforts of the Task Force as well as the Transition Commission. It reflects another component of the ongoing efforts to address barriers to certification and licensure.

PLANS - POSSIBLE EFFORTS TO BE UNDERTAKEN BY MEMBER-AGENCIES OF THE TASK FORCE

Taking into consideration the identified barriers to credentialing and the goals and objectives of the Task Force, the Task Force has developed a number of plans intended to facilitate credentialing of current and former military personnel. In some instances the plans build on existing initiatives, while in others they entail new efforts on the part of the Task Force or individual agencies represented on the Task Force. Proposals are actions that may require cooperation of agencies or organizations outside of those represented on the Task Force and/or require legislative action. Each of the plans and proposals are the result of the efforts of the two working groups described above. When the Task Force reconvenes in January 1999, the plans and proposals below will be prioritized and an implementation schedule will be developed. Working groups will be reorganized to carry out this effort.

Improve Existing Interfaces

The Task Force will provide a high-level briefing to the Department of Defense and Office of Personnel Management regarding the progress of the Task Force to date. This would serve both to provide information and establish a liaison.

Promote Federal Government Employment

The Task Force has identified a number of ways to improve the employment prospects of veterans seeking employment in the federal government. The Task Force's initiatives in this area center on providing information to those individuals in the federal government responsible for hiring or establishing hiring standards.

Provide Information to Human Resources Officers. Recognizing that there appears to be a need for increased awareness of the barriers concerning credentialing and hiring of former military personnel, the Task Force will make efforts to publicize this issue to human resources officers in all federal agencies. The Task Force will identify appropriate officials and submit an informational letter to them on this subject matter. If additional information is requested, the Task Force will respond accordingly.

Promote a Better Understanding of Military Occupational Training Programs by OPM. Building upon the discussion that has begun as a result of the Task Force meetings, the Task Force will continue to promote a heightened awareness of the occupational programs within the military by OPM. A better understanding of training programs will promote recognition of such credentials in occupational standards for employment in the federal government.

Improve Military Personnel's Understanding of Credentialing and Access to Resources

Related to the barriers discussed above regarding military personnel's lack of information on credentialing issues, the Task Force has identified a number of actions that might take place to improve the amount and quality of information provided. These actions will also promote easier access to resources that will support service members wishing to obtain credentials.

Assess Information Needs of Military Personnel. One of the most important means of alleviating credentialing barriers for military personnel is to educate them on issues related to credentialing. To do this, the Task Force decided that it will be necessary to first determine what information is currently made available to service members regarding credentialing, and then identify what additional information should be disseminated in order to better prepare them to become credentialed. At a minimum, military personnel need to be made aware of the fact that when they leave the military, they may be required to obtain some form of credentialing in order to obtain employment or be competitive in the civilian workforce. Providing additional information on specific credentialing requirements for the military occupational specialties affected by credentialing would be the most effective method of alleviating credentialing barriers.

Communicate to Military Personnel Availability of Resources that Support Credentialing. As part of an overall marketing strategy, the Task Force will research ways in which information can be provided to active-duty military personnel regarding credentialing issues. Some strategies include dissemination of information through:

- articles in base newspapers;
- posting on the centralized Department of Defense website;
- attachments to military pay stubs;
- posters at Family Service Centers;
- articles in Army/Navy/Air Force Times;
- Veterans Service Organizations; and
- brochures.

The Task Force will identify the best possible methods to provide information to current and former military personnel at different points of their career, including at recruitment, training, transition, and after leaving the service. The Task Force also suggests that the Department of Defense examine the feasibility of building credentialing into their career paths — as part of the life cycle model.

Alleviate Geographic Barriers. Working with the Department of Defense, the Task Force will promote the increased availability of technology for service members who are interested in training or educational programs offered in sites that are geographically distant.

Provide Information to Civilian Credentialing Boards

The Task Force also seeks to promote the heightened awareness of credentialing bodies regarding military training and experience and the documentation of such. The Task Force will develop a plan for disseminating appropriate information to civilian credentialing boards regarding issues surrounding recognition of military training, education, and experience. In addition, credentialing representatives will be invited to attend future Task Force meetings to present their particular system of recognizing credentials in their fields. The development of a dialogue is planned.

The Task Force learned about the Sailor Marine American Council on Education Registry Transcript (SMART) program which will be an academically acceptable document for the purpose of obtaining academic credit for military learning experiences. It will be validated by the American Council on Education (ACE) and will contain the service member's military learning experiences and his or her corresponding ACE credit recommendations. It will also contain test scores for the College Level Examination Program and the American College Testing Program. SMART is still in development and transcripts are expected to be available in FY 00.

Promote Development of Demonstration Projects

The Task Force hopes to build off of existing efforts that show promise for alleviating credentialing barriers for current and former military personnel. Specifically, the Task Force wants to promote the use of Fort Eustis, Virginia and Fort Sill, Oklahoma for possible demonstration projects between the military and federal credentialing agencies. Based upon previous pilot programs documented above, the Task Force will promote the use of Fort Eustis for other demonstration projects modeled after the FHWA commercial drivers license program. With the location of Fort

Eustis in Virginia near the Washington, D.C. region, a pilot project will be easier to start up and evaluate. Fort Sill in Oklahoma also has a transportation program that might serve as a possible venue for a demonstration project.

PROPOSALS FOR FUTURE ACTIVITIES WHICH REQUIRE OUTSIDE AUTHORIZATION FOR COMPLETION

In addition to the initiatives planned for future action on the part of the Task Force, the Task Force has also identified actions to alleviate credentialing barriers that would require the cooperation of agencies or organizations outside of those represented on the Task Force.

Promote the easier access to military background checks by federal agencies who hire former military personnel. Working with human resources officials in the federal agencies, the Task Force would like to promote a process that allows easier access to military background checks in lieu of traditional background checks that can be time consuming and costly.

Advocate Various Legislative Changes to the Montgomery GI Bill

Explore legislative changes to allow use of the Montgomery GI Bill for certification and licensing expenses. Currently the individuals may use the Montgomery GI Bill only to pursue a program of education. It may not be used to pay the fees needed to take a licensing or certification exam. Since the DoD is no longer funding these expenses, the Task Force will explore the feasibility of amending existing legislation to permit use of the Montgomery GI Bill to pay for them.

Explore legislative changes to allow service members not currently eligible for the Montgomery GI Bill, to participate in this program. The Task Force will explore the feasibility of amending existing legislation to permit active duty personnel who opted out of the Montgomery GI Bill or who are otherwise not eligible for this program, a new “window” of time to change their previous decision and participate.

Explore legislative changes to allow the accelerated use of the Montgomery GI Bill for education, certification and licensing expenses without financial penalty. Currently, the Montgomery GI Bill can be utilized for pursuing a program of education while still on active duty. However, the total number of months of benefits available to the individual is reduced according to the number of months the individual is in training rather than the amount of benefit received. For example, a service member who would be entitled to \$528 per month after discharge may pursue a half-time program for two months while receiving \$100 to reimburse him or her for the tuition costs. That service member would lose a full month’s entitlement. Transitioning counselors in the military note that this situation has to be clearly explained to the individual who is considering utilizing GI Bill funds for education and training expenses. This is due to the fact that the individual must decide whether to be fully reimbursed for tuition and fees under the Montgomery GI Bill while losing

benefits available upon discharge or to receive only a 75% reimbursement for tuition under the DoD tuition assistance program while saving the entire Montgomery GI Bill for use after discharge.

Explore the plausibility of legislative changes lifting the 10 year deadline for use of Montgomery GI Bill benefits. Currently there is a 10 year deadline following discharge for the use of Montgomery GI Bill benefits. The Task Force will promote the lifting of this limit. The lifting of this deadline is consistent with the current effort on the part of the federal government to promote access to lifelong learning. Since most American workers will have seven or eight jobs in their lifetimes, and with the speed of change in the workplace increasing, veterans should have access to unused GI Bill benefits throughout their working lives.

Interface with Other Organizations/Groups

Request attendance at an Interservice Training Review Organization (ITRO) meeting. The Interservice Training Review Organization is a DoD group of representatives from each of the training commands whose goals are to eliminate duplication of training programs; standardize instruction; increase training efficiency; reduce training costs; review new system training; and review interservice training regulations. Communicating with organizations like ITRO will help to educate the different branches of the government as to what additional efforts are being taken. It will also promote cooperation and decrease the perception in DoD that the Task Force will have an adverse impact on retention.

Contact Personnel Security Committee. This committee, comprised of 30 to 40 various federal agencies, has addressed the issues of reciprocity of military security checks and records and the sharing of this information with federal agencies when employing former military personnel. This group may be the appropriate organization to address the problem of time delays for background checks set forth above.

RELATED AGENCY ACTIVITIES AND INDIVIDUAL INITIATIVES

Below is a discussion of various initiatives that are being undertaken regarding certification and licensure by federal agencies. While all may not deal directly with credentialing issues specifically for transitioning military personnel, they were deemed relevant to the overall services provided to both active duty personnel/veterans and the general public at large regarding life-long learning and employment services.

Department of Labor/Veterans' Employment and Training Service Initiatives

DoL/VETS has a number of initiatives underway, outside of the Task Force, to address credentialing barriers for current and former military personnel.

Website Project. VETS has begun the process of developing a webpage that will provide up-to-date information on civilian credentialing requirements and information unique to the needs of current and former military personnel. The VETS website will integrate existing databases and webpages related to credentialing with newly gathered data, specific to current and former military personnel, in an attempt to provide a centralized location for comprehensive information on credentialing issues. It is expected that this webpage will provide:

- background information on federal, state, and private sector credentialing issues with a particular emphasis on how these issues relate to current and former military personnel;
- general information on civilian licensure and certification requirements for civilian occupations relevant to military personnel;
- detailed information, specific to military personnel in selected credentialed occupations, on how they can meet civilian credentialing requirements; and
- links to more specific information on civilian licensure and certification requirements for other occupations.

State Pilot on Worker Credentialing of Current and Former Military Personnel. DoL/VETS is sponsoring a pilot project that is designed to alleviate state-level credentialing barriers confronted by current and former military personnel in selected occupations. The pilot will operate in five states (Maryland, Georgia, South Carolina, Ohio, and Colorado) with each state focusing its effort on a specific occupational area. The states will hire a full-time veterans' representative. The representative will collect information on military training and experience in the selected occupational area in order to determine the extent to which it meets civilian credentialing requirements. The veterans' representative will then work with the state credentialing body and the military services to identify ways to improve the ability of current and former military personnel to meet civilian credentialing requirements. In addition to enhancing the employability of current and prospective veterans seeking employment in the pilot states, the pilot will serve as a model that can be emulated by other states and in other occupations.

Microsoft Skills 2000 Initiative. Microsoft Company completed a pilot project at four Transition Assistance Program (TAP) sites (San Diego Naval Base, Langley Air Force Base, Norfolk Naval Base, and Fort Lewis Army Post), which channeled qualified individuals to computer training. This led to certification in computer applications including systems analysis, programming, and local area network administration. Microsoft hired an employment agency to provide placement assistance following completion of the program. The program was deemed highly successful and plans are underway to expand the program to 180 TAP sites nationwide beginning in January 1999.

Communications Workers of America Initiative. The Communications Workers of America (CWA) has created a database and website which is used to match jobs with job seekers in the communications fields. Specifically, CWA has been matching transitioning military personnel with companies that are experiencing an employee shortage. As of August 1998, 60 veterans had registered for this service, five were referred and three were hired. The average time between referral to hire was only four days. The following companies have partnered in this program: US West, Lucent Technologies, Pacific Bell and AT&T. CWA has requested that DoL/VETS notify them of upcoming TAP job fairs so they can attend with representatives of the above listed companies and carry out referrals on site.

National Occupational Information Coordinating Committee (NOICC)

NOICC works with key federal agencies that have a stake in the collection or use of labor market and education data. NOICC also works with a number of national professional associations which are concerned with workforce and career development, education, employment and training. Partnering with State Occupational Information Coordinating Committees (SOICC), NOICC activities focus primarily on the information and training needs of staff working directly with youth and adults or planning programs in education and career development, employment services, or workforce preparation.

The Licensed Occupation Information System (LOIS) is a joint initiative of NOICC and the SOICCs. LOIS is a computerized database of information about licensed occupations within many of the states. LOIS offers three basic search options - by states, by commonly used occupational titles, and by state agencies that license occupations. Currently there are 22 states and one territory linked to the database. There are plans to expand to the remaining states and territories.

National Partnership for Reinventing Government

Representatives from the National Partnership for Reinventing Government (formerly the National Performance Review) have been attending meetings of the Task Force. This agency is charged with reviewing the performance of federal agencies and identifying and awarding attempts to provide improved customer service and streamlining of agency functions. The efforts of the Task Force are an example of these types of improvements.

National Skill Standards Board (NSSB)

The mission of the National Skill Standards Board is to establish a national system of voluntary skill standards for approximately 98 percent of all existing occupations in the U.S. To meet this goal, the NSSB is creating Voluntary Partnerships made up of representatives of industry, union, worker, community, government, and education and training sectors of the population. Partnerships will be created for 15 industry clusters representing a majority of the existing occupations. Each of these industry-led Partnerships will establish skill standards, assessment and/or certification systems,

and will be looking at entry-level jobs for the kinds of skills that are needed in each of these industry clusters. The goal of the system is to create a common nomenclature, a common language, and a common format for how skill standards will be written for the assessment and certification programs.

Occupational Information Network (ONET)

ONET is a comprehensive database system for collecting, organizing, describing, and disseminating data on job characteristics and worker attributes. Sponsored by DoL/Employment and Training Administration, ONET replaces the outmoded Dictionary of Occupational Titles (DOT), but offers more than merely updated information. ONET provides a new conceptual framework that reflects the advanced technologies, adaptable workplace structures and wide-ranging skills required by today's changing workplace. ONET will link to other existing databases including America's Job Bank.

Army Research Institute Study

The Education Division of the Army has requested a study be conducted to show the relationship of in-service civilian education to attrition, retention, and training performance. The Army Research Institute (ARI) study will measure whether education is a factor in attracting and retaining soldiers. Various education incentives (Montgomery GI Bill, Army College Fund, and Army's Loan Repayment Program) have been effective resources in recruiting efforts. However, the Army believes that highlighting and strengthening in-service education benefits, programs, and services may help leverage the competition with civilian employers who are drawing from the same employment pool.

SUMMARY

This interim report on the activities of the Task Force represents just the first step to reducing the barriers to credentialing by transitioning military personnel. As noted, the January 1999 Task Force meeting will focus on the implementation of the plans and proposals set forth above. A strong foundation has been established in these first meetings, and progress has been made in tackling the many complexities of this issue. In the coming months, the Task Force expects to build upon the relationships that have developed so the implementation process will proceed smoothly. With the continuing trend toward industry adoption of certification and licensure as a means of validating job readiness, the Task Force will continue to see that military personnel are provided as many resources as possible to ease the transition to civilian employment.

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